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Garden for Your Freezer

Mason Reger
Iowa State College

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The author's wife, Sigrid, finds broccoli a good vegetable for freezing. But you'll need to spray broccoli with DDT after each harvest to prevent cabbage looper infestation of the next crop of sprouts.

Garden for Your Freezer

by Mason Reger

YOUR HOME FREEZER can assure you of vegetables with that "fresh-from-the-garden" flavor and quality long past harvest. There's a surprise in store for you if you've never tasted garden-fresh asparagus or peas and don't realize their true flavor. You'll be able to enjoy these summertime delicacies months after the ground has frozen.

Vegetables which have the finest quality in the home garden are those best adapted for freezing.

MASON REGER is assistant professor of horticulture at Iowa State. He specializes in garden crops.

Chlorophyll—important in green vegetables—is easily lost due to high temperatures in the canning process. But it's preserved in freezing.

Remember, if you want enough fresh vegetables for both immediate use and freezing, you must double the space ordinarily given these vegetables in your home garden.

Asparagus, chard and green beans are dependable producers under Iowa conditions. They make excellent frozen vegetables.

Peas, lima beans and spinach also freeze well but are more difficult to grow successfully in Iowa. The

biggest problem with broccoli is insect trouble. Broccoli is so attractive to insects that, even when it grows well, it's hard to keep free of insects.

Peas

The most common of all frozen vegetables is peas. Although this crop is adapted to commercial freezing, it's not so well suited to home freezing because of the shelling problem. The Experiment Station at Morden, Manitoba, Canada, has come to your rescue with a small bulletin (available on request there) on how to make a home pea

sheller. It's simple and has been found to do an effective job.

The pea sheller is a beater which knocks the berries out of the shell. The berries then fall through a screen which retains the hulls. The bits of hull and tissue remaining on the berries are removed by rolling them on a blanket which catches the small pieces in the nap. The clean peas roll into a vessel and are

of its growth, asparagus must be frozen in small quantities during the entire spring season of harvest. This is an advantage because the home freezer can chill only small quantities of food at one time. By growing enough asparagus for the home freezer, as well as for current use this spring, it's possible to have enough on hand at all times.

Frozen asparagus tastes much

corn. To capture that fresh flavor, corn for freezing is harvested when quite immature. In freezing corn, there's none of that long-time high-pressure cooking required when canning. The corn is merely scalded in boiling water. But you must start with a tender product.

Discoloring of the kernel, a commercial canners' problem, isn't possible when freezing corn because of the limited cooking needed to scald the kernel.

Sweet corn can also be frozen as whole corn on the cob but it often gets a cobby flavor. Remove the pith of the ear so that heat can quickly pass through both sides. This permits a thorough job of scalding which prevents "off flavors."

Varieties of corn adapted to Iowa conditions are Marcross (early); Ioana and Golden Cross Bantam (midseason); and Country Gentleman and Silver Cross Bantam (late). It's best to plant all the corn intended for freezing at one time. There's no need to prolong the freezing season.

Broccoli

Although broccoli has never been commercially produced in the volume of peas, asparagus and sweet corn, it's one of our finest freezing vegetables now gaining in popularity.

Broccoli isn't a dependable crop in Iowa since the summer buds are often loose and flowering. When successful, it yields over a long period of time. A 20-foot row of broccoli can produce the requirements of a large family if it's grown well and kept free of insects. It should be planted early in the spring by setting out plants rather than by growing from seed. You can start to cut it in July and continue until the first heavy frost. Broccoli isn't easily killed and often is harvested long after the other vegetables have been frost-bitten.

In harvesting broccoli, remove only the edible parts so the remaining leaves will produce buds during the rest of the season. After each harvest it's best to thoroughly spray the plant with DDT to prevent cabbage looper and aphid infestation of the next crop of sprouts. Thus, the plants are protected without



You'll find Swiss chard both an excellent green, leafy vegetable for Iowa gardens and one that's easily prepared for the freezer. It's important in Iowa since our climate isn't adapted for spinach.

ready for freezing.

Iowa's favorite varieties for freezing are the Thomas Laxton, Laxton's Progress and Little Marvel.

You'll want to plant three or four times as many peas in order to have a reasonable supply for the home freezer.

Asparagus

Asparagus is another vegetable especially adapted to freezing. This crop produces small amounts over a long period of time. It's necessary to have a long row and cut the asparagus daily in order to have enough of uniform size for a meal.

Asparagus, like sweet corn, rapidly loses its best flavor and fine quality upon storage. It should be prepared for freezing immediately after cutting. Due to the manner

more like the fresh product than does canned asparagus. Frozen, it retains its bright green color. Because of the high yields you'll find it worth your while to devote more garden space to asparagus for use in the home freezer.

A 100-foot row of asparagus is recommended for a family of four or five. It should be planted along the north side of a garden since the high fern that grows later in the summer tends to shade low-growing garden plants. Or, you may put it between the garden and the lawn as a decorative hedge. The attractive fernlike foliage of asparagus makes it ornamental. The fronds can be used in flower arrangements.

Sweet Corn

Sweet corn is popular frozen since its flavor is typical of fresh

having the poison applied to the edible portion.

Italian Green Sprouting or Calabrese broccoli matures in about 70 days after plants are set. Broccoli varieties differ in their maturing dates. Generally the earlier varieties produce less foliage and a smaller total yield.

Also available is a variety of broccoli known as "Freezers." It produces a large number of small sprouts with very small heads. The sprouts aren't concentrated into one central head and thus provide more suitable freezing material. "Freezers" eliminates the job of splitting and quartering the broccoli head.

Swiss Chard

You'll find Swiss chard both an excellent green leafy vegetable for Iowa gardens and one that's easily prepared for your freezer. It's easy to grow and has high yields. A small space will produce more chard than any other leafy vegetable you can grow.

Chard is important in Iowa because our climate isn't adapted to growing good spinach. Also, chard leaves withstand scalding and handling conditions that cause spinach to cook down to a mass.

Swiss chard is also known as "leaf beet" or sometimes as "spinach beet." The Common Green variety matures in about 55 days from seeding and produces large leaves resembling sugar beet leaves. These are ready to use as soon as they get about the size of lettuce leaves. They should be picked without actually harvesting the plant itself so you'll have Swiss chard during the entire season.

The flavor is similar to ordinary table beet leaves. But chard is much more mild and has less of the red coloring which gives beet tops their "rough" taste.

It's much better to harvest chard leaves when the leaves are more tender at about a third to a half of their fully-developed size.

Some families cut off all the leaves from chard at one time when they wish to freeze the product. This is a poor practice because the plant must keep on growing with little or no stored plant food. Harvest only the leaves that are cur-

rently mature. The large outer leaves that remain can manufacture more food and hasten the growth of inner leaves.

Varieties of chard commonly grown are of the Fordhook Giant type. They are tall and sturdy with broad heavily-crumpled leaves and thick white stems. The Lucullus variety has the same type of leaf, colored a bright yellowish-green, and thick, broad pale green stems. Red chard is one of the most brilliant vegetables grown in Iowa. It's decorative on the table whether used fresh or as a frozen product. Rhubarb variety is the most common of the red chards.

Usually a 20-foot row of chard is sufficient for freezing and fresh use.

Spinach

Spinach, when it can be grown successfully, is a likely prospect for your freezer. Its bright green color and vitamin content—so easily lost in canning—are preserved by freezing. Because spinach is a leafy vegetable, scalding can be done quickly.

Spinach can be grown in Iowa only if the season has a long cool spring. For this reason, the Bloomsdale variety, which has the ability to stand up longer under hot weather, is recommended. One disadvantage of the variety is the difficulty of cleaning the sand out of its crinkly leaves. Improved Nobel is another good variety capable of withstanding some hot weather. It has thick fleshy leaves and retains a dark green color when frozen.

When growing spinach, thin the plants so they're spaced at least 6 inches apart. If grown too close together, spinach plants have long, thin stems and leaves. Properly spaced, spinach will grow fast and take advantage of the cool weather. The leaves will be thicker and the plants won't form seed stalks until late in the season.

So far we've discussed vegetables especially adapted to the freezing processes. The ones we've mentioned have better quality when frozen than when preserved in any other way. Lima beans and green

beans have freezing possibilities but lack one way or another in some other desirable quality. Here's their story:

Lima Beans

Lima beans are a second-choice vegetable for home freezing because they're difficult to grow in Iowa.

Lima beans are often abused because they're prepared for freezing when too mature. They should be harvested when a slight golden band begins to form on the outside of the pods or when the beans inside are still tender and sweet. If lima beans are harvested after this stage they become like the dried bean and must be cooked in a pressure cooker or cooked for a long time.

The best varieties of lima beans for freezing are of the Fordhook type. But you can't depend on these varieties to bear well under Iowa conditions year after year. Generally there's about one good crop in every 5 years. For this reason we recommend the Henderson variety. Lima beans are better frozen than canned. The bean can be shelled in the pea sheller previously described.

Green Beans

Green beans are commonly frozen because of the resulting better flavor and color. But the process makes the fibers more evident and more chewy than either fresh cooked or canned green beans. The outer skin tends to separate from the frozen beans, detracting from their appearance. This is unfortunate since it's impossible to safely preserve green beans by home canning unless a pressure canner is used.

However, the fibrous quality of frozen beans can be reduced by using beans that are much younger and smaller than those used for fresh beans.

If you want to freeze green beans, choose the Giant Stringless Green Pod variety. Long before maturity, the pods are a suitable size for freezing. However, Burpee's Stringless Green Pod will yield best under Iowa conditions.